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# THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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*Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.*

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FOR PARAGRAPHS UNDER THE WORD "ANS." THE EDITOR IS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE.

*April, 1894.*

## QUESTION CCXC.

*What is the real meaning of that phrase so often seen in Theosophical papers, "the great orphan, Humanity"?*

*Ans.*—It has none, so far as would appear. An orphan is a person who has lost his parents. But if, as the Adept Paul affirmed, we are "the offspring of God", orphanage is so far from being our case that we really have the highest and best of parental care. God neither has died nor will He, so that humanity is sure of permanent affection and oversight.

Children have not only the loving care of a parent, but the valuable help and instruction of tutors selected by the parent for their wisdom. And so humanity has perpetual stimulus and aid from Masters who are fitted by long evolution for such work, and are prompted to it by that Divineness of spirit which is a reflection from the Supreme Goodness. Thus it would seem that the human race possesses all the filial privileges pertaining to Divine descent, and, in addition, the large-hearted help of the "Elder Brothers". "Orphan" would appear about

the very last word to describe it. "Beloved", said St. John, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be".

The supposition that humanity is a living organism tossed off into space to wander ignorantly and stumble blindly, without guidance, supervision, or aid, the sport of chance, accident, or even concealed Law, seeing little in the dusk but its own failures and sorrows, is a most extraordinary one for any person who can perceive clear design in the simplest organ of the human body and copious method in its general functioning. Is it not strange to concede intelligent purpose in the mere animal part of man and deny it in his mind and soul? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that provision for good exists in proportion as the sphere for it is exalted, and that the very amplest is found in the moral and spiritual natures of the crown of creation—Man?

The truth probably is that "the great orphan, Humanity" is one of those phrases which catch the ear because sounding well, and that are seized and repeated without any thought and without any definite meaning perceived or intended. Half-educated Theosophists are like other half-educated people, and fall into parrot-like ways which discredit the system. "Sound" has some influences which are not mentioned in the *Secret Doctrine*, but which are well known to writers on social topics. One is this "taking" quality of certain expressions which captivate ears unconnected with brains. They thus acquire currency and a degree of reputation, figuring in the out-put of loose writers until some recognized authority brands them as spurious and frightens the *canaille* out of their use. So, let us hope, it will be with the "orphan". Anybody can begin the process by asking the offender when God died.

*W. Q. J.*—This phrase has a deep significance for me. An orphan may also be one who had no parents, as the state of orphanage is that of being without father or mother. If we imagine a child appearing on the earth without a parent, we would have to call it an orphan. Humanity is the "great orphan" because it is without parents in the sense that it has

produced itself and hence from itself has to procure the guidance it needs. And as it wanders in the dark valley of the shadow of death, it is more in need of help and counsel than the mere body of a child which is the ordinary orphan. The soul is parentless, existing of itself from all eternity, and, considered as soul, mankind is hence an orphan. Plunged into matter, surrounded on every side by the vast number of intricate illusions and temptations that belong to earthly life, it stands every day and hour in need of protection as well as guidance.

If the idea of a loving parent be applied to the notion that a definite God has produced mankind, then we find that this supposed parent has at the same time invented the most diversified and ingenious series of bedevilments and torments to beguile, hurt, harass, and finally destroy the child. For if a certain one God is the maker or parent of man, then He also is the one who made nature. Nature is cruel, cold, and implacable. It stops for no man, it never relents, it destroys without mercy. When inhabitants of earth multiply, Nature manages to destroy millions of people in a night or two, as has now and then happened in China; the very elect of the earth are swept off the earth in a moment; slowly and painfully the infant races creep up the ladder of time, leaving as they go vast heaps of slain at the foot. The whole of life presents, indeed, to man more frowns than smiles. It is this fact that has made so many who are told of a loving father and at the same time of an illogical scheme of salvation revolt altogether from the idea of any meaning to life but despair.

I cannot see how the phrase "great orphan" carries with it the notion of being without guide or helper. The orphan is everywhere; but among the units composing it are some who have risen through trial to the state where they can help the lower ones. Orphans themselves, they live to benefit mankind of which they are a part. They are the head of the body of which the lower members are the less developed units or atoms. Enthusiasm for the "orphan" is that which will lead to devotion and sacrifice; and that enthusiasm must be developed not only in the Theosophist, but in all the men of earth.

Having it they will help all on their own plane, and each stratum of men rising in development will help all below until all belonging to the globe have risen to the perfect height. Then they can proceed to other spots in cosmos where are also wandering vast masses of souls also units in the "orphan", who require and can then receive the same help that we had extended to us. If this is not the destiny of man during the time when all things are manifesting, then the remark of Spencer to the effect that altruism is useless because when universal there is no one to benefit, must be accepted. However, the phrase in the question is one of those rhetorical ones that must not be read in its strict letter and ordinary meaning.

## QUESTION CCXCI.

*In a recent lecture by an F. T. S. the grand possibilities open to a multi-millionaire for the accumulation of an enormous wealth of Karma by the altruistic expenditure of riches were dwelt upon so rapturously, while the Karma born of the "Widow's Mite" was mentioned with such marked decrease of consideration (perhaps not intentionally or even consciously) that the following queries suggested themselves:*

*(1).. Is it not inconsistent to suppose that good Karma can be accumulated in larger quantities by the altruistic expenditure of a millionaire's wealth than by the giving of the "Widow's Mite", since a man can only be judged generous by what he has left after the gift?*

*(2). Can Karma be acquired, or deposited like money in a bank to be drawn upon for future needs; and is not the contemplation of it as a thing to be stored up illogical, illusory, and a direct incentive to self-seeking?*

*(3). Is any Karma good "per se", or in fact good at all, except in so far as it compensates and atones for past transgression; and is it operative any more after all misdeeds have been expiated, i. e., can a man have Karma to his credit?*

*(4). Does not Nirvana follow the full satisfaction of Karmic law, and, if so, how can there be any more place for Karma of any kind?*

*Ans.*—As Karma is force and must operate in the different regions where it is exerted, there must be operation in each of the two cases cited in (1), but it will be different. The charitable millionaire has the double Karma resulting from his charitable spirit and from the direct benefit to the poor caused by his gifts. As the latter is wide-spread and great, the assuagement of suffering and the gratitude of the relieved must be vast in amount, and this amount, in accordance with the law of force, recoils in happiness upon the donor. The charitable disposition, too, has its merit and its reward, but as there has never been any occasion for its being exercised at the cost of self-sacrifice, it cannot receive the peculiarly great return which attaches specifically to such.

On the other hand, the "Widow's Mite" has insignificant effects in relief of suffering, and so cannot start mighty forces in that way; but it has immense, even incomputable, value because given through self-abnegation, and the whole generous system of Nature is aroused in response. So that, in a very rough fashion and with due regard to all qualifications, we may say that the millionaire's Karma is largely physical and the widow's largely moral. They pertain to opposite sides of a common substance—altruistic spirit, opposite because of conditions, and so one has to do more with external felicities, the other with internal blessings. *More* to do, not *only* to do, observe.

(2.) Karma must be laid up or in abeyance, since it obviously is not expended as soon as formed. Good and evil consequences of acts do not instantly appear, many not manifesting for years, many not till the next incarnation, some not till still later ones. We certainly reap what we have sown, but nobody reaps a crop immediately after sowing. Hence Karma is stored up and is drawn upon when the time comes, though the drawing is not done at the will of the owner. He has no control of that, it being managed by a Law which has had its origin n Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power. In due season all the Karmic effects of deeds come to pass, circumstances arranging themselves so as to bring about exact return, these circumstances being, of course, in part secured through the person's

own career, though not intentionally so adjusted, inasmuch as no one knows either the quality or the amount of the award due him, nor how to precipitate it. His share in making possible the conditions of return is unconscious, however real.

There is nothing illogical or illusory or self-seeking in the doctrine of stored-up Karma if one understands it correctly, in the Theosophical sense. Of course a life regulated simply with a view to accumulate merit for selfish consumption would be open to this objection and would defeat its own ends, just as truly as a life regulated simply with the aim of pleasure. But no such extreme position is contemplated by Theosophy. It recommends, indeed, abstinence from evil and adherence to good because of their respective consequences, but this is no more than common-sense recommends in the most ordinary matters of life. The wise man avoids slippery walks by precipices, and also selects judicious investments for his property, without any one's supposing him a selfish egoist. For like reasons a Theosophist may very well abstain from hurtful acts to his neighbor and may cultivate civility and justice. But the larger principle, applicable to fields of all size and not merely to this, is that right is to be done because it is right and not because it pays, though it does. The true man loves goodness for its own sake, just as he loves physical cleanliness, and is concerned to do his duty fully for the reason that it *is* his duty. Karmic effects are not the motive, for, if they were, the prompting to right would be only a refined selfishness: it is, in fact, a desire to fulfil the end of being, and there is nothing selfish in that. Nor does it become selfish because the resulting Karma is beneficial, that not having been the motive for the action but only an incidental consequence. So, then, a Theosophist believes that Karma is a stored-up force, sure to expend itself on the originator, yet he does not therefore pass his life in amassing good Karma, but in the doing of duty, his belief in the obligation of duty being the really motive power. And that motive is unselfish.

(3). We call Karma "good" or "bad" as the causes producing it are. If a man steals he produces bad Karma; if he assists the worthy poor he produces good Karma. It cannot

at all be said that the only function of good Karma is to counteract bad, for this would make it purely relative, and would also make badness instead of goodness the essential principle of the universe. Sweet and gentle deeds have a flavor of their own and an effect of their own; one, too, of much more consequence than the mere cancellation of its opposite. If it had only that result, what would be the condition of a man who had done more good than evil? Would he be exactly where was the man who had done precisely as much of the one as of the other? What would be the philosophy of the obliteration of the surplus good, any more than in the contrary case the obliteration of the surplus bad? Whatever is owed us we are sure to get: the account is settled when all is paid off, not when debit and credit are equal. And until the account is settled there may be a surplus of either.

(4). This question is not very clear. Only Masters have the right to Nirvana. If it means, Does not Nirvana follow instantly the attainment of Mastership, No, for some Masters reject it to become Nirmanakayas. It is true that Masters have surpassed the retributory range of Karma, for, having become assimilated to the Perfect Law, They are rather a part of it than the subjects of it. They are not liable to evil for having committed evil, since they commit none; and as there is no fluctuation between right and wrong, They dwell serenely in perpetual right as in an atmosphere.

*W. Q. J.*—As to (1) the altruistic expenditure by a millionaire of his wealth in large quantities must accumulate to him more "karmic credit" than if he had but little. Mere expenditure of money is nothing, but the really altruistic, unselfish use of it is much. Every time such a person thus expends for the good of others he thereby excites in all who are benefited a sympathy and a portion, small or large, of love. This cannot be wiped out, any more than an evil act, until it is exhausted by a corresponding action on the part of the person who thus gets benefit. Hence such a millionaire necessarily makes to himself friends who will one day in some life benefit him. If this is not so, then all the doctrines of karma and cause and effect are of no value.

(2). Karma may not be acquired like money in a bank; it cannot be deposited; but a store of merit may be laid up to the account of any one who acts so as to lay it up. If the law is looked at from the selfish side as something that one may lay up for himself, of course it will tend to self-seeking; but it is hardly possible for one to believe in and act under the law and fail at the same time to see that if he does so selfishly he limits his store and sometime will nullify all its effects. It is not good karma to act selfishly; hence he makes bad karma by so acting from a self-seeking of benefit under the law.

(3) Good karma is that act and thought which is pleasing to the Higher Self. Hence sorrow and pain and discipline may be good karma. Bad karma is that act and thought which displeases the Higher Self. Hence all self-seeking acts, no matter how high and outwardly virtuous they are, are bad karma, since the Higher Self desires no such acts for its sake.

(4) Nirvana comes to those who have risen up over all delusions and have realized the supreme unity of all; then it may be taken; but if it is then taken for oneself, leaving others in the mire of life unhelped, it becomes an enormous selfishness which later on must result in the being having to do penance in some other manvantara.

## QUESTION CCXCII.

*Somewhere in Theosophy we are told that the Egos now on the planet are largely the reappearance of the Atlanteans. But I notice more resemblance to the Romans and Greeks. Our style of architecture, our ideas of pastime, such as prize-fights, foot-ball, wrestling, and rough or unrefined amusements, are all in line with the classic ones. Even the Greek type of feminine beauty is apparent once more, and women affect Greek ideas in dress and fixings. How does this consist with the statement tn question?*

*Ans.*— But we cannot detect more resemblance in present things to the classic ones than to the Atlantean, because we have no specimens of the latter. We have no architectural remains of the Atlanteans, no records of their dress, amuse-

ments, or style of beauty. Hence there is nothing to form a basis of comparison. Besides, it is also said, and the average Devachanic interlude bears out the assertion, that the old Romans are reïncarnating in the present era, so that any existing resemblances to classic times may well be explained as revivals from the last incarnation. There must have been a number of incarnations since even the final disappearance of Atlantis, many more since the earlier cataclysm, and it is hardly probable that peculiarities would reappear after having been displaced by so many later ones due to changed climate, civilization, and habits.

More likely is it that the Atlantean revival is manifesting itself in psychic tendencies, and the classic in intellectual and artistic. The great characteristic of the Atlanteans was psychic power misused. Time effaced it and directed racial evolution to different lines. We have reached a period when spiritual forces are asserting themselves strongly and when reaction from selfish policy is beginning to manifest in numbers of men anxious for higher ideals: it may be that coincidently with this the cyclic turn is bringing again to the surface the old psychic powers, though among such individuals and at an era when their operation can be more safe,—at all events, when there is an opportunity for the race to be tested as to its ability to use them fitly. Spiritual perception having somewhat evolved, psychic knowledge may not be out of place.

But intellectual progress has been made since the Dark Ages, and with the unfoldment of intellect and taste has come a reversion to the standards of the most refined and cultivated period of historic antiquity. Art looks lovingly back to Greece. But the reïncarnation of Romans may revive Roman tendencies in the direction of muscular achievement, war, national spirit, and thus the combined effect of evolution and reïncarnation of Egos be to produce greater love of beauty, greater homage to force, and with them a budding of psychic powers and a diffused spiritual sense. Atlantis, Greece, Rome, and a still earlier era of distinct spiritual perception may all be moulding our own day.

*W. Q. J.*—The questioner seems to have misunderstood the

matter. As the Atlanteans preceded the Romans and the Greeks by many millions of years, the Romans and Greeks themselves may have been and likely were an appearance of the Atlanteans. It was said by H. P. B. that all the present Race are Atlanteans. This must be so if the first parts of her anthropological scheme are correct, for the reason that that old form of race preceded all the later, the latter being simply the various reïncarnations of the former. If, then, the sports of the present or any other form of life led by us seem like the Roman or the Greek, that is only because we do not know what were the forms in which the Atlanteans in their time indulged. Similarly, as we have no knowledge of what was the Atlantean type of beauty or of intellectual achievement, there is nothing in what the questioner says which in any way militates against the Atlantean theory. When we shall have discovered fully all about the Atlantean civilization and the physical form as well as mental calibre of that race, we can then say what subsequent smaller race most resembles it. It must also be remembered that we as souls are quite likely to be the same souls that inhabited the bodies of the Atlantean man, because that race existed so very long ago as to be *sui generis*.

## QUESTION CCXCIII.

*In killing out desire, do you not also kill out worldly ambition? When a man has done this, is he fit to fight the battle of life, or to be the head of a family?*

*W. Q. J.*—In killing out desire we do not kill out right action, though we may kill ambition. It is likely you have a wrong meaning for the word "ambition", as it is wrongly used by many It is used out of its way to mean energy and action, whereas it does not mean that. It means the desire to get gain and power and glory and wealth for oneself, and that is selfishness of the worst, and hence ambition may be rightly killed and no true progress is made till it is put under. But by following the rules given, that is, to do your duty, you cannot neglect your great and small duties, hence you will care

for your family. But if you give the word "ambition" the meaning of the opposite of "apathy" and say that he who kills ambition becomes apathetic, then all would be folly. Fitness to fight the battle of life is not from worldly ambition at all, but from a right and strong sense of duty, from a determination to do it, and from a true sense of your duty to your neighbor.

*Ans.*—This question was replied to at length in FORUM 13

## QUESTION CCXCIV.

*What entities, besides Kama-Rupa, communicate with man from the astral plane, and what vehicles for manifestation are used besides the Rupa and astral body of the medium? Which of the communicating entities are friendly and which hostile, and what are the means of distinguishing between them? Have in mind the evocation of Apollonius of Tyana.*

*W. Q. J.*—Hundreds of classes of beings communicate from the astral plane with the living through mediums and otherwise. Of this subject the West does not know. Hence you will have to take on faith if you believe at all what I reply. Many degrees of elementals communicate. These are all of no use to us, but harmful. Many of them are used by black magicians who live in the astral world in their kama rupas. They use the elementals, they live thus on the living by absorption, and this is the great danger of all such things. Some of them may be friendly, but unless you have the means and sight of your own to tell which, no direction would be of any use. Even while friendly they are injurious, for they must use a part of you or some one for the work, and they thus set up the likelihood of another not friendly using you the same way. Apollonius was an adept and cannot be safely imitated by any less person. If you are too strong to be influenced and get another person as the means for it, then you will be wrongly exposing the other to a danger you are yourself exempt from.

*Ans.*—By all means turn to FORUM No. 5, Question XIV, and realize, if possible, from what mode of thought the modern world has been delivered, and ask yourself whether that can be a healthy view of the universe which produced the mediæval conception and would reproduce it if allowed. Read also the last three paragraphs under Question LXXXVIII in FORUM No. 18. It is entirely possible to hold that invisible realms are peopled with invisible lives without holding that human beings are perpetually affected by them, infested with them, vampirized by them. Why need you bother about them at all, any more than about the roaming lions in mid-Africa or the octopi in Southern seas? The doings of strange creatures in other regions and on different planes are of small concern to us who do not live therein, especially as we have ample occupation in saving ourselves from the real dangers which actually beset us in the world. It may be that the Kama Rupic entities know and care as little for us as we for them; but whether or not, the habit of dwelling on them and seeking protection against them leads to a mental state which was fully exemplified in the Dark Ages. If "the tree is known by its fruit", we can easily value this particular kind of tree, for the fruit was most conspicuous and unmistakeable. The intelligent and illuminated soul will never turn back to either again, and Theosophists would make a deplorable blunder if they strove to revive conceptions which thinking men and religious men have united in gladly burying three centuries deep. We live in the 19th century: don't let us be unworthy of it!

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